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as unpatentable over Chappell et al in view of Wilson et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,207,310). However, for the reasons set forth hereinafter, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-10, 12, 17 and 18 distinguish over the applied prior art.

The present invention is directed to a decentralized power supply system in a vehicle which achieves a significant saving in efficiency and weight, and also saves on labor expenses in assembly of the vehicle. In particular, in the decentralized power supply system according to the invention, a fuel cell system is installed, for example, in a vehicle door, and is collocated with the electrical consuming devices in the door, for which it serves as a dedicated power supply source.

As a result of this arrangement, the wiring necessary to couple the respective power consuming devices with the vehicle power supply is significantly reduced, achieving a saving in cabling and weight, since each power source is situated only a short distance from the consumers to which it is dedicated. Furthermore, because of the physical collocation of both the power consumers and the power source in, for example, a vehicle subassembly such as the door (depicted in the Figure), the latter can be completely assembled with the electric devices assigned to them (including, for example, a motor for raising and lowering the window, power door locks and the like) as well as the fuel cell system itself, at a separate location and installed on the vehicle in a small number of steps. Wiring between the vehicle body and the electrical components served by the fuel cell can be eliminated. This feature of the invention also has

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the further advantage that the wear and tear normally associated with wiring connections between the vehicle body and the door can be eliminated.

The Chappell et al reference, on the other hand, discloses an emergency vehicle exit arrangement in which an auxiliary battery is provided to supply electric power to the vehicle's windows and door locks when the main battery is destroyed or disconnected from the vehicle's electrical system during a collision. In Chappell et al, however, the auxiliary battery is situated within the passenger compartment of the vehicle. (See Column 2, lines 57-62; Column 4, lines 38-44.) The specification notes that this location of the vehicle battery in the passenger compartment is considered particularly advantageous since "it is protected from damage when the vehicle is involved in a collision".

Each of the independent claims in the present application recites in various terms the proposition that the decentralized power system according to the invention includes at least one fuel cell system which is dedicated to supplying electricity to an assigned electric consuming device that is incorporated in a structural subassembly of the vehicle, and furthermore that the fuel cell system is collocated with the electrical consuming device to which it is assigned, and is mounted on or in the same structural subassembly of the vehicle in which the consuming device is mounted. (See Claim 1.) Claim 17 recites that the fuel cell system is "collocated with said electric consuming device, in a structural component of the vehicle". Similarly, Claim 18 recites that the fuel cell system is "mounted on or in said component part, collocated with said

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electrically actuated device, and is dedicated to supply electric power to operate said electrically actuated device.

The latter features of the invention are neither taught nor suggested by the Chappell et al reference. In particular, as noted previously, the auxiliary battery 16 in Chappell et al is located in the vehicle passenger compartment, and is connected to supply electric power to each of the left and right side windows and door locks in the vehicle doors. Accordingly, the auxiliary battery in Chappell et al is not collocated with a power consuming device or group of power consuming devices to which it is dedicated. Indeed, the auxiliary battery 16 in Chappell et al provides power to the windows and door locks in each of the doors of the vehicle. Moreover, Chappell et al actually teaches away from the invention, stating that it is (as noted previously) advantageous that the auxiliary battery be centrally located in the passenger compartment. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1, 17 and 18 distinguish over the Chappell et al reference. Since all of the remaining claims dependent, directly or indirectly from one of Claims 1, 17 and 18, the remaining claims are distinguishable as well.

If there are any questions regarding this response or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and

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please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit
Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #225/48391).

Respectfully submitted,



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